Interview with Robert F. Goheen

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROBERT F. GOHEEN

Interviewed by: Frederick Aandahl

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Q: Dr. Goheen was President of Princeton University from 1957 to 1972, and Ambassador to India from 1977 through 1980. Dr. Goheen, thank you for agreeing to give an interview to the Association for Diplomatic studies.

GOHEEN: Well, Mr. Aandahl, I'm delighted to meet you again and to have the chance to talk with you.

Q: Good. We have a nice, quiet opportunity, I think.

GOHEEN: I think we do.

Q: I wanted to ask how you came to get involved in foreign affairs, particularly with India.

GOHEEN: Well, I was born and raised in India as a missionary child. And, I guess, all my life I have had an interest in that part of the world. When I became more adult I tried to read and keep up with things there. My family had many friends who helped us to keep in touch. I went back to India a good many times when I was President of Princeton serving as a consultant for the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation in some of their work in higher education in India.

Q: Did you go to school at all in India?

GOHEEN: I went to school through the tenth grade in South India at what was then a missionary school called Kodaikanal. It now exists and continues very well as an independent school.

Of course, we all got involved in the Army at a later time. That's right. Well, after a tour of duty, first, as an enlisted person, and then in officers training school, and then in Washington, G-2, I went to Southwest Pacific. I didn't really want to go back to India, though the War Department wanted to send me there, because I knew that was going to be a British operation, basically, and I wanted to get much more involved on the American side of things. I had been working in War Department G-2 under Dean Rusk, as a matter of fact, on both the Southwest Pacific and South Asia. And so I was delighted when I later had a chance to go to the Southwest Pacific.

Q: And you were in the Philippines for a while, weren't you?

GOHEEN: Yes. That was part of MacArthur's area, so-called Southwest Pacific. We staged north of Brisbane, Australia, and then went up into the Admiralty Islands, and from there on into Leyte, and then up in the Luzon.

Q: That was quite an impressive career.

GOHEEN: Well, I kept busy.

Q: I wonder if I could jump ahead a few years and ask what were the immediate circumstances of your appointment by President Carter?

GOHEEN: I was astounded by it because I'm not active in any political party and I don't have any money to contribute to politics, to speak of. Though I was a very, very minor and ardent Carter backer, I don't think I had ever really come to his attention. I did know

Cyrus Vance, the incoming Secretary of State, and he knew that I knew a lot about India. It turned out further that on the panel that reviewed possible ambassadorial appointments that the President established, I chanced to have two good friends. One was Dean Rusk and the other was Ann Martindell. [Telephone interruption]

So I had some prejudiced witnesses working for me, but I suspect I knew as much about India as most people who could have been available for that job.

Q: In getting ready to see you here, I looked up and saw what a distinguished group of predecessors you had.

GOHEEN: I certainly did.

Q: Henry Grady, Loy Henderson, Chester Bowles, George Allen, John Sherman Cooper, Ellsworth Bunker, Kenneth Galbraith, Kenneth Keating, Daniel Moynihan, and William Saxbe.

GOHEEN: It was a very distinguished group. It was a terrific group. I knew all of those people except Grady. I never met him. I had, one way or another, known all the rest of them.

Q: When you compare it with the list of politicians or big contributors at many other posts, India, apparently, has been reserved for people who were active in public affairs in the broader sense.

GOHEEN: I think that's been true, yes.

Q: I wondered, also, were you interviewed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

GOHEEN: I was, but they were very gentle with me. They didn't push me at all. But again, I knew a few people on that committee.

Q: Well, you've been strategically located for a long time, so you know almost everybody, I should think. Of course, you've been to India a great many times, but when you returned to India, did you find any great surprises from what you had seen earlier? You came, I guess, a few years after separation.

GOHEEN: Well, from about 1957, when I became President of Princeton, until going there 20 years later as ambassador, I must have been back to India seven or eight times, so that I had seen the progressive industrialization around the bigger cities and the second-tier cities, seen the growth of traffic, and development of pollution and all those other things that were happening. And so there's no surprises visually or in terms of just being there.

I went at an extraordinarily interesting time because India had, since independence, been governed by a single part, the Congress Party, which, to be sure, under Mrs. Gandhi, split off and became Congress (I). But it really was a continuity of one party controlling the country. And then there was this tremendous uprising of popular antagonism to her and her policies in early 1977 that led to the election of a new composite Janata Government, the People's Government. So, I went in as a whole new regime came into office, full of enthusiasm, full of promise. We were all very optimistic about the restoration of democracy in India.

And then over the next almost four years that I was there, I saw two further governments. Thus, in my short span as ambassador, there were more changes in government in independent India than it had had in its whole history before. That helped to make the job fascinating.

Q: Mrs. Gandhi was still the principal politician even when she was out of office.

GOHEEN: She was quite quiet for awhile and then she began to assert herself. By strange coincidence, I had come to know her a little bit when she came to this country with her father. Let's see, that would have been in the Kennedy period, 1962, I guess

it was. By chance my wife and I were up in New Haven for the Yale-Princeton football game weekend with Whitney Griswold, then President of Yale, and his wife. Among the other house guests there, besides the two of us, were Indira Gandhi. Then she was a quite young, apparently non-political person. Young, being my age then, you know, 40-something. Also a guest was Dorothy Norman, an older woman, who had written a lot about India and was a friend of the Nehru family. So, I had, as I say, come to know Mrs. Gandhi a bit.

When I got to New Delhi, after presenting my credentials and getting to know the people in the new Janata Government, I felt it was incumbent on me also to get to know the leaders of the various opposition parties, of which she was far and away the most important. I called on her, and she appreciated that, though the government didn't appreciate it entirely.

Q: You mean the Indian Government?

GOHEEN: The Indian Government, yes. Our government thought it was the right thing for me to do.

Q: Yes, I would expect that.

GOHEEN: She appreciated my call, and we developed, I wouldn't say a terribly warm relationship, but a very good, fairly candid relationship for discussions together. She never gave me the kind of grief she gave some other ambassadors. She could be very, very short with them, they told me, and impervious to any real discussion. But I never had that problem with her. Later, I had to deal with her a lot during the last year I was there because she came back in office in January of 1980. I was there right through to December; I was there for 12 months when she was the Prime Minister.

Q: What was the principal focus of US policy toward India in your tenure?

GOHEEN: Well, President Carter had a very genuine interest and concern about the Third World. And he had a particular interest and concern about India. I think it was because his mother had served there in the Peace Corps and had an, apparently, very moving and worthwhile experience. He had caught a lot of that feeling; so, a major effort was to try to show the goodwill of the United States toward this new, restored democracy of India and our desire to work and cooperate with them, stand together for human rights, and things like that. That concern was reflected in the fact that India was one of the few countries that the President visited. He came in the winter of 1978 to visit in New Delhi.

Q: Had he been in India before?

GOHEEN: No. He had never been there before. The President, Cyrus Vance, and Roy Atherton all came out together. They had first gone to Tehran which was not, I think in retrospect, a terribly successful visit. They had a pleasant time but they really didn't understand what was going on there. Then they came to India and had on the whole a good visit there, because of the President's great interest.

The big issue between us, through the whole time from before I got there until after I left, was the discrepancy in nuclear proliferation policy between the two countries. India, you know, had exploded a nuclear device in 1974 which they called a peaceful nuclear explosion. And that so shocked people in this country and members of the Congress that there was a great push on to tighten American nuclear export policy. That came afoul of a contractual agreement which we had made back in 1963 to supply uranium fuel to two power reactors built by General Electric a little bit north of Bombay at a place called Tarapur.

And so this issue of maintaining our commitment to supply fuel to these reactors, to that real contractual obligation, came up against legislation which was trying to cut off all of that and which, in effect, did cut off that kind of supply unless there was a Presidential waiver.

Well, over a period of time, we got two Presidential waivers because the President wanted to keep good relations with India and he also respected the contractual obligation.

But the nuclear doves in Congress were so strong that there was no real chance of keeping the supply relationship alive after those two shipments. This was a very thorny area of amicable enough discussion that never approached agreement on resolving the issues, though we tried many different ways of coming to a solution. So, when I left office in January of 1981, I certainly left that big, unresolved, and festering problem behind me.

Q: What was going on with regard to Pakistan on this?

GOHEEN: Well, about March of 1979 we became aware that Pakistan not only seemed to be pursuing a course toward nuclear armament, but was definitely doing so, that it had managed clandestinely to get information and material from Europe and was developing an enrichment capability. The Carter Administration then invoked legislation, the Symington amendment, which terminated economic aid to Pakistan for awhile, trying to put the screws on Pakistan without, I think, any real success. Of course, we in India thought it was a good thing that our government was doing.

But when the Russians invaded Afghanistan in late December of 1979, that whole arrangement got turned tipsy-turvy. It came to seem to the President, and Brzezinski in particular, critically important to back up Pakistan, show our commitment to helping it as an endangered forward line state. The President offered to provide Pakistan $400 million economic and arms aid almost immediately. That's what General Zia described as peanuts, if you remember; in his view, it wasn't nearly enough.

But that issue of our willingness to arm Pakistan, in the last year that I was in India, was a very sore point in our relations with India because, from the Indian standpoint, every time we arm Pakistan, as we have in the past, Pakistan has used those arms to attack

India and not to defend against communism or anything else. So they are very sensitive to American arms supply for Pakistan.

At the very same time our people were running around in China trying to talk with the Chinese about closer relations, including the supply of various kinds of arms. That also made the Indians very nervous because they still remember all too vividly getting whipped in that 1962 border war with China; they remain very suspicious of the Chinese. So, part of my task was to try to convince the Indian Government, Mrs. Gandhi, that the United States really did care for India. We were not going against India by trying to have better relations with China and by helping Pakistan. And that was my message. That was what I kept trying to sell week after week.

Q: Did you get good support from the Department?

GOHEEN: Yes. It was a wonderful Administration to work with, at least for me, because I knew that Cyrus Vance saw at least some of my cables and the President was very receptive. I saw him before I went out to India, I saw him every time I came back. I saw the Secretary every time I came back. And, you know, a lot of ambassadors don't manage to do that.

Q: No. It helps a great deal.

GOHEEN: Yes. It helps an enormous amount.

Q: Did you have good relations with the desk also?

GOHEEN: Yes. For this history, I would record that I was tremendously well impressed by the professional Foreign Service with whom I dealt both at the desk and in the field. I really had wonderful colleagues and, with very, very few exceptions, they were people of high caliber and intelligent, dedicated people. I really enjoyed it.

Q: One of the perennial cases where there is friction is between the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission.

GOHEEN: I had a wonderful DCM, whom I inherited. He had run the embassy for, I guess, the better part of a year. Saxbe left as soon as Ford lost the election.

Q: I sort of lost track of Saxbe.

GOHEEN: Saxbe was put in by the Ford people, or maybe by Nixon just before he went out. And Bill was out there with a mandate, really, not to do anything. The Nixon people really pretty much washed their hands of India following the Bangladesh debacle, and the infamous tilt toward Pakistan, and things like that. Bill Saxbe was a very able and nice guy, but he went out there with a mandate not to do anything, just to represent. And he had a wonderful time playing golf, and shooting, and buying rugs, and doing all those things. But as soon as Ford lost the election, he packed up and came home.

So his DCM, David Schneider, who is a real veteran of the South Asia service—a wonderful fellow and Yale alumnus—was the DCM when I arrived. And he and his nice wife, Ann, really broke me in. I had never been an Ambassador. I didn't know what an Ambassador did. They were wonderful and I was awfully sorry when they left. He went back to Washington for a brief stint, and then ended up being our ambassador in Bangladesh.

But his successor was an equally fine person who had been, in many people's view, given a very bum deal by the Kissinger people. His name was Archer Blood. Arch was our consul general in Calcutta at the time of the troubles leading to Bangladesh breaking free. He would send back to Washington cables about the genocide that was going on and on. Those messages were very inconvenient for Mr. Kissinger, who was trying to promote a very close relationship with Pakistan as a bridge to China. So, Blood got brought home,

and I think he served in the Personnel office for a short time; I'm not quite sure of that. Then he was sent off to the Army War College. That's where he was when I took office.

As you know, I think they regularly let an ambassador consider a number of possibilities for his DCM and I talked with a number of very able and nice people. But I thought that Blood, of the ones I talked with, was the one that I could work most easily with and whose judgment I had high respect for. So Archer Blood and his nice wife came to New Delhi and served as the DCM the rest of my time there. He was an excellent DCM. Very, very professional but, you know, good breadth and good judgment.

So, as I say, I had luck. I had wonderful colleagues. And it's as true of my principal political officers, economic officers, junior political officers, and AID director. They were really high class people.

Q: How were the local employees? Were there problems, as we have had in some other countries?

GOHEEN: No. We had, I would say, minor employment problems. I guess it was during more or less the last year and a half of my time in New Delhi that the State Department undertook a world-wide reorganization of positions for foreign nationals. Getting this world-wide perspective to actual local and regional scenes involved a good deal of strain, and argument, and contention. But over time, the necessary adjustments were made. Harry Barnes was the Director General at that time, and he proved to be a very good person to work with on that set of problems. But the Indians who were helping do our political and economic reporting seemed to me to be very able and very easy to relate to.

Q: I was going to ask further about the efforts you made to better the relationship between India and Pakistan.

GOHEEN: Well, I'm fairly pessimistic about the ability of the United States or any external power to change that situation, other than either to rile it up by supplying arms or doing

something nice for the other party, to which the second party always reacts negatively, or by staying out of the way. Arthur Hummel went to be ambassador in Islamabad the same time I went to New Delhi. And Art, you know, is a seasoned professional. We got to meet and know each other in Washington a bit before I went out. We were mutually determined that our embassies would not be sources of friction. Let the Indians and the Pakistanis have their frictions; we were not going to work against each other.

Q: There is a tendency for US missions to represent the local government.

GOHEEN: I think that we managed that very well. We were aided by the fact that we knew and liked each other. And then annually there was a chiefs of mission meeting where we could get together and talk. My senior political officer had served there and his had served in India, so all those things helped, I think. The British found it out before us and we found it out afterwards—namely, that our ability to bring about good relations between India and Pakistan is extremely limited. They are going to be governed by their direct perceptions of each other, which still tend to be very suspicious and, at quite a deep level, antagonistic. I think we're going to have to see another generation come. Now, this may be Ms. Bhutto's generation. I don't know.

Q: She's certainly a change from all the other people.

GOHEEN: I had hoped that with young Rajiv coming into office, we would see a greater relaxation toward Pakistan on his part. In both countries people take a lot of their cues from the leadership, I think, more than here. It looked for a short time as though that was going to happen. Then, for one reason or another, partly the Punjab problem, he found it expedient, or necessary, or desirable to become very tough-minded toward Pakistan. He feels, and I guess he thinks he has evidence, that Zia condoned the training of Sikh militants in Pakistan. That, of course, inflamed his thought and Indian thought. He may have been right. Zia, in turn, thought India was aiding people opposing his government

and working for a democratic Pakistan, which probably was right, too, so that there were all these tensions.

Q: In that period, Afghanistan had not yet become such a problem as it is now.

GOHEEN: I do not believe that the Afghanistan issue initially was a big issue between India and Pakistan. It was, initially, a very big issue between our government and India's. When the Russians moved into Afghanistan in December of 1979, a care-taker government led by Charan Singh was in power, about to turnover authority to Mrs. Gandhi's government which was just then being formed. Her party had won the parliamentary election but she was not in office yet. The Ministry of External Affairs apparently fumbled around and tried to get Charan Singh to authorize a statement about India's response to the Afghan situation, but he wouldn't do it.

Some people, whom I know but won't name, got to Mrs. Gandhi and persuaded her to authorize a text which was just terrible. You may remember that it was read as part of the U.N. debate when India abstained from the general condemnation of Russia for that invasion. This statement made the point that the other superpower—I forget the exact wording—had built up its military forces in the Indian Ocean to the extent that one should not be surprised that the USSR felt some need to react to that threatening presence. Well, you know, that was ridiculous and self-serving. I have good, personal evidence that she never really knew what she was approving. I mean, she trusted these two fellows and, in effect, said, “If it's all right with you, it's okay.”

So, this was a terrible blow. I mean, you can imagine the American reaction to that Indian statement coming at a time when the President was worked up about this enormous new menace that the Soviet Union had come to be. Remember, he said he had not realized how dangerous it could be until this move into Afghanistan.

I came back from Delhi for consultations very shortly after the invasion, while the Charan Singh government was still in office and before Mrs. Gandhi had taken office. So, I was

in Washington and about to return to India on the day of the debate in the UN when this statement was read by India's permanent representative there. I got a copy of it at the State Department moments before I was to make a farewell call on the President at the White House.

So, I had a copy of it, and I went over there, and I said I had to see Brzezinski quickly. He came out and I said, “Do you know about this?” He said, no, he didn't know about it. I said, “Well, here's the statement.” I've forgotten what he said, but it was something like, “Oh, my God.” I said, “Who is going to tell the President about it?” He said, “You are.”

So, we went in to meet the President and, after the ceremonial picture taking and politeness, we were alone, the three of us. I told the President and he exploded. I had not thought of him as an irascible person in any of my previous contacts with him, but he just exploded. He got livid and even cursed. I then had to work to calm him down. I said, “You know, we know very little about this situation. Mrs. Gandhi's government isn't officially in office yet. The Charan Singh government is going out. For goodness sakes, don't do anything and please don't say anything until I get back to New Delhi and can look into this and report more fully on it.” After fuming some more, he accepted that, which was good.

I was able then to call on Mrs. Gandhi and also tell off the two guys who wrote that statement; the latter probably did no good. I made the point to her that, if she had approved this, she had very badly misinterpreted the sure American reaction to it. She said she hadn't meant to alienate us, and she felt that we, perhaps, were overreacting. She was convinced diplomacy was the way to get the Russians out, rather than threatening them, and India was committed to trying to do that. So I was able to report all that back to the Department; maybe it did some good.

She never got credit in this country for the fact that she did stand up against the Russians. Gromyko made a special trip to New Delhi in January or early February to try to get the Indian Government to endorse what the Russians had done in Afghanistan, and she flatly

refused to do it. But the fact that she wouldn't come out and pick up the cudgels against the Russians was always held against her by many people in this country.

Q: Well, this is a good example of how advantageous it is to have an excellent ambassador who can see the President.

GOHEEN: Yes, sure.

Q: Most of them are cut off, except for completely ceremonial affairs.

GOHEEN: Yes, sure. If it hadn't been for his interest in India, I'm sure I wouldn't have seen him.

Q: Were you visited often by congressional delegations?

GOHEEN: I would have liked to have had more because my feeling was that Congress generally ignored India except to complain about problems. I wanted them to realize that this is a real, functioning democracy and that it has a lot of the same problems that we do. Often there, as here, it is hard to get a clear party line and sometimes policy isn't absolutely consistent because you have all these political forces at work.

Q: I suppose the embassy was concerned very much in keeping track of at least the major party.

GOHEEN: We had several congressional delegations but, as I say, I would have welcomed more. I think most of the visits were worthwhile in terms of congressmen getting a better sense of what the Indian government was like and what the country was like. There are a few individuals who were, obviously, boondoggling, but I don't think of any delegation being a waste of time.

Q: They are always getting stories in the paper about junkets of one sort or another.

GOHEEN: One congressman, whom I won't name, embarrassed us all by asking where he could get dirty pictures. You know, it was incredible. I didn't know where to get them. We had to ask our social secretary who she said she knew people who could get him some.

Q: I'm reminded of the story of one of the crazy politicians of the 1950s who gave De Gaulle an exploding cigar. Fortunately, the Eiffel Tower didn't collapse and we were all right. You didn't have too much concern about international terrorism like we've certainly had in the last few years.

GOHEEN: No, not at all. Every now and then we'd get a threat that some Japanese Red Army people were passing through India. They would tighten up security around the embassy for awhile, but I never worried about it. After the Iran fiasco we got a certain amount of demonstrating from Iranian students. There were lots of Iranian students in India. They would show up, often accompanied by people from the Communist Party of India—all bussed out and probably paid three rupees; mill around; shout slogans and threats outside the residence and the chancery and then depart. I never felt any more threatened by them than I had felt threatened by some demonstrations here at Princeton. Some of our security people wanted me to take a lot of precautions that I thought were silly. I didn't do it, except for the residence because of my wife being there. I was never personally troubled.

Obviously, this wasn't terrorism, but mob action. Things got much more serious in Islamabad. Just before we were to spend the better part of the week there with the Hummels, the chancery in Islamabad was attacked by a mob and burned.

Q: I had forgotten that episode.

GOHEEN: It was attacked by some Pakistani fanatics who thought that the United States had been involved in some violence at the Black Mosque in Mecca. I don't remember the details. Some pilgrims were killed and somehow some Moslems in Islamabad thought

the United States had had something to do with that. So, they took out their anger on our embassy at Islamabad. Obviously, somebody must have organized and planned the attack; they devastated that place and Zia's troops were very, very slow to react. We were very lucky that we didn't lose a bunch of people there. But anyhow, obviously, the Hummels didn't want any guests just then; they had their hands full. So, we never got to Islamabad. I've been there at other times, but not on that trip.

Q: I was going to ask about the seizure of the embassy in Tehran. Was there much impact on the Indian Government?

GOHEEN: The Indian Government, ever since its founding, has made a point of cultivating the Arabian and Moslem states. It stands to reason, when they've got an internal minority of 90-plus million Moslems and Moslem Pakistan not too friendly on their western border, that they should want to have good relations with the Gulf states, with Egypt, and Morocco, with Libya, the whole bunch of Islamic states.

When the Shah was overthrown, India quickly appointed a Shiite ambassador to Tehran in the hope that he could be a door opener, or a good link, between New Delhi and Tehran. I don't think it really worked. I don't think that at that time the Iranian people cared about their neighbors at all; they didn't care what anybody felt. They had their own agenda and, beyond their internal agenda, it was to spread their fundamentalism through the Arab world and wherever else they could.

Q: Any public sentiments you could see? I imagine the government kept at arms length.

GOHEEN: Well, it was a mixed reaction. The Shah had cultivated relations with India carefully and even aggressively. He looked upon his country and India as being the two principal secular nations and modernizing nations in that part of Asia. He thought that they had a common agenda in keeping down the mullahs and other reactionaries so as to speed economic progress. He put a lot of money, for example, into a big iron mine down

on India's western coast at Kudremukh. He put other money into extending the Rajasthan Canal. He and Mrs. Gandhi met at various times and, apparently, got along pretty well.

So, he wasn't looked on by Indians as the kind of villain that many other people saw him to be. Indeed, I would think that, because he really did stand for a secular state and Indians sometimes feel as though they are the only secular power around in a vast sea of Islam from Indonesia through to Morocco, there must have even been disappointment for some Indians in the turn of fortunes in Iran, though they wouldn't say that. They surely didn't say that publicly.

Q: How did your background in classical studies, educational administration, and scholarly foundations affect your contacts with government and people of India?

GOHEEN: Well, I think classical studies give you an appreciation for history. They give you a sense of appreciation for people other than your own kind of people. As a classicist, you need to try to reach out and understand how the Greeks thought, or the Romans thought, which isn't always the way we think. There is a certain amount of training in that. I also think scholarly research tends to develop an attentive and analytical habit of mind which is useful in many walks of life.

Q: Did you get at all into philology?

GOHEEN: No. I'm not a philologist. I was more a historian of ideas and literary critic. But as a scholar, you have to learn to take some complicated data, break them down, analyze them, come to some conclusions. The general utility of that showed in the Second World War. Many academic people ended up in staff positions in the various services because they had been taught to think critically and analytically, and to write.

The university presidency was, obviously, important in two ways. You learn to manage—or lead, if not manage—a large, complex human organization. There are a lot of personnel problems you have to be sensitive to, and that was valuable. In a university president's life

in a university like this there are also always many external relationships, plus entertaining, and making speeches of general import rather than specifically internal import—all, the same kinds of things an ambassador has to do.

Q: You have to be very flexible, too.

GOHEEN: Yes.

Q: In fact, I was wondering how you allocated your time among all the duties of an ambassador in a country of 800 million, with the Agency for International Development, and the USIA, and the Atomic Energy Programs, Agriculture, CIA, Treasury, and Defense. You were the universal man.

GOHEEN: You learn to try to size up your chief lieutenants in all those areas and how much you can rely on them; make clear to them that you expect them to raise their problems with you and not to run around corners; and meet with them often, sometimes with a full staff, but also in terms of their particular concerns. Every Monday we would have a staff meeting of the principal heads of these organizations.

I want to say two things. One of the things I liked was that Delhi was the kind of embassy in which I could roll up my sleeves and get right into the middle of things, especially in political affairs, but also into some of the economic issues, because I knew something about them and my officers knew that I knew. I think maybe at times they wished I would leave more of that to them, but they were nice and tolerant of my intruding on their reporting duties. I appreciated that, and I think I had good relations with all of them.

Because, as you said, it's such an enormous and diverse country, I felt it was a mistake to stay in Delhi all the time. I guess about every month and a half, usually with my wife, I would go off for four or five days, sometimes more, to some other part of India to meet with the government officials there, to talk with politicians and press there, meet with the Rotary Club, do all those things, just try to get a feel of this enormous country.

Q: Did you go by car, or train, or plane, or all of them?

GOHEEN: Well, we did all of those things. In North India we had a nice arrangement. We, often, would fly to our destination, but I would send an embassy driver ahead to be there to meet us and drive us around for the days we were in that area. Or, if it was near one of the consulates, the consul general would provide the transportation for us. He would usually come with me, although they couldn't always do that. I really felt that I had a much better sense of that extraordinary country that way than I ever would have had if I had just sat in Delhi. It's like sitting in Washington.

Q: Yes, very much so.

GOHEEN: You get to see things through such a narrow lens, such a special kind of lens, in any nation's capital.

Q: Something inside the beltway.

GOHEEN: And you can't ignore that, but it certainly isn't representative of the country.

Q: Did you make many speeches to Indian audiences?

GOHEEN: I never got my Hindi to the point where I could speak it that way, though I studied Hindi while I was there. I'm sorry to find that I'm losing it every month. I talked in English to Chambers of Commerce, and Rotary Clubs, and Foreign Affairs Clubs in all the major cities and many of the minor cities like Bhopal, and Indore, and Miraj, and places like that. That was part of it. I didn't go around the country just to sightsee; I went to represent the country and you do that, partly, by speaking.

Q: I suppose you had a security man with you occasionally, or at least in the appropriate places.

GOHEEN: I'm sure the Indian government almost always had somebody watching; I didn't always know about it. Certain cities, like Bombay, used to trouble me because the city government made a terrific fuss, providing us with motorcycle escorts and security people; we would have been happier to come and go quietly as we did in Madras. They never paid any attention to us while we were in Madras, that we knew of, although the security agencies probably had somebody watching over us.

Q: In retrospect, have you figured out what your most significant accomplishment was in your four years there?

GOHEEN: I don't think I really accomplished anything of terrible import. I think that I probably served . . .

GOHEEN: I think I helped the Carter Administration project its and my concern that India and Indians understand that the United States really cared about their country, and that we were not just bent on building up Pakistan at India's expense. I think I helped a little bit in this country, especially with respect to some of the members of Congress—getting them to begin to realize that India is an enormously powerful country, as well as a great big one, and that it has a great capacity in that part of the world to affect what goes on, so that it is in our interest to be on good terms with this almost major power. It is far and away the strongest military and economic force between Aden and Singapore.

Q: Well, those were major accomplishments. What goes with it, usually, are frustrations.

GOHEEN: Yes. You can get frustrated. People don't listen sometimes, but I didn't experience any deep frustrations. I mean, I knew that, in terms of affecting Indian policy and what not, as an ambassador, the most I could do would be, at best, to soften it at the edges a little bit or to keep it from clashing with our policies where they differed in such ways as to produce heat. I knew too much about the subcontinent to think I could create peace between India and Pakistan or that I could help American and Indian interests come

into absolute alignment. I mean, it would be nice if you could do those things, but that's beyond the pale. I never thought I could do those things.

Q: Why don't we take a specific example. Was there anything that American industry, or your embassy, or the Indian authorities could have done to prevent the Union Carbide disaster at Bhopal?

GOHEEN: I was shocked by that. I visited that plant. I'm not a scientist or technologist; so, I'm in no position to say whether it was well run or not. Interestingly enough, however, it was a piece of collaboration of which both Indian business and the Indian Government were very proud. It was a successful kind of collaboration until this dreadful accident occurred. Now I think it remains very much a matter of dispute whether it was negligence that caused the accident.

Q: That's up to a jury in India to decide.

GOHEEN: Yes. The Union Carbide people are convinced it was an act of sabotage and they know who did it, but the Indian Government doesn't want to recognize that; so, it remains a very disputed case. But the consequences were terrible, including the fact that it is all hung up in the courts. The poor people who have suffered have gotten no compensation at all to speak of.

Q: A lot of them will have died before they ever get compensation.

GOHEEN: Sure, yes. It is very, very tragic.

Q: My final question, is there anything else you wish to talk about or any question I forgot to ask you?

GOHEEN: No, I think I've said everything that I want to. I can just add that it was, for me, a tremendous experience, both personally and professionally—if I can at all now claim to have become a foreign affairs professional. You know, when you get asked to be the

ambassador of your country, which you love, to the land of your birth, which you also love, it's a tremendous thing. When I had to present my credentials and make a short speech, the way the ambassador always has to, I really choked up. It just grabbed me inside. And I continue to feel a tremendous sense of privilege in having had that opportunity.

At the same time, I tried to discipline myself very hard to keep my eye on the interests of the United States. My job was to represent the interests of the United States and not let my affection for India overly color my activity. I tried to do that. I also tried to help people in this country understand better what some of India's interests are and what some of its problems are. And I think developing that kind of understanding of divergent interests is, again, a service to American interests. So I enjoyed the opportunity. I don't know how well I did, but it was a great opportunity and I enjoyed it immensely.

Q: Aren't you partly continuing it now in your work with the foundations?

GOHEEN: No. My foundation work does not relate to international affairs at all. But I'm on a number of boards and various study groups which keep my international interests alive. I've taken part, for about the last five years, in a study and discussion group headed by Gerard Smith that meets in Washington periodically on nuclear nonproliferation issues. I try to keep up with the South Asia side of that and contribute my thought and experience. I'm currently heading another group concerned with the Philippines, with what's going on there and what the prospects are. I'm on the board of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; we are always talking about international issues there, of course. I'm on the board of The Asia Society, that's why I'm on the Philippines study group. The Society is active in relation to India, as well as East Asia and Southeast Asia. I'm on the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, which keeps alive some of my interests in higher education out there. So, you can see, I keep busy and a lot of my activity has to do with foreign relations and especially Asia.

Q: On behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, I thank you very much, and for myself. I've enjoyed the chance to talk with you again after a long time.

GOHEEN: I've enjoyed talking with you. I don't know what you can make of all of this because it was not a terribly significant ambassadorship.

Q: Well, get the transcript to you eventually, if you want to see it.

GOHEEN: Sure.

Q: And I'll bring some release forms around and would like to get from you a short curriculum vitae, which is the usual stuff.

GOHEEN: Okay, yes.

Q: And if we can get a black and white photograph, particularly for the period when you were ambassador.

GOHEEN: Well, I'm not sure if we have any of those left. I can probably give you a curriculum vitae right now.

End of interview